

U.S. Congressman Mike Pence commented on the oil spill in the Gulf Coast and the president's lack of responsibility on MSNBC's Morning Joe:

Rep. Pence: Let's just recognize this isn't about a blame game. This is an ecological disaster that is threatening the families and the environment on the Gulf Coast. We've got to be serious about it, deal with it. What can the president do, Joe? Well, he can lead and he can take responsibility. What I heard James Carville saying, what many of us have been saying for weeks, that this administration was slow to respond, and quite frankly now that it's been more than a month, we still haven't seen this administration, this president really make a priority of dealing with the discharge. Literally, I'm joining tens of millions of Americans in praying that that top-kill technology that is being put into effect right now works and seals it. But, look, this happened in federal waters. BP is responsible for shutting down the leak, but that's not BP's coastline. That's our coastline. This president should lead, should take charge, should grab the whole process by the neck and say what are we doing to protect our coast?

Joe Scarborough: So what's the Republican plan to stop this leak?

Rep. Pence: What's the Republican plan? Well, we can talk to Bobby Jindal. He's been requesting the Army Corps of Engineers, give them permitting to do the berms. They've been waiting two weeks now to get approval from the administration and the Army Corps to take things into their own hands. Bobby Jindal is saying as the president heads down there tomorrow that he wants the president to come down and put people in charge who have decision making authority with the Coast Guard, who can deploy people into the region. I'll defer to Bobby, but, you know, it's not even Governor Jindal's responsibility. It is under the Clean Water Act section of the Oil Pollution Act, it is the president's responsibility to ensure effective and immediate removal of the discharge in cases like this. All I'm saying is the president needs to lead. James Carville and I finally found something we can agree on.

Jonathan: Congressman Pence, you just said it again, the president needs to lead. What does that mean exactly? Are you saying that the president and the administration hasn't done anything at all since the place blew up on April 20th? What exactly does "leading" mean?

Rep. Pence: Jonathan, I'm not saying they haven't done anything at all. You know, when I said on, I think it was May 5th, that the administration was slow to respond, I was hearing from members of congress in the region that the administration had delegated the entire response, including the cleanup, to BP. Local officials and fishermen and people that wanted to help were having to go to BP for permitting when the administration, under the Oil Pollution Act, had the ability to usurp control of dealing with the entire discharge, of dealing with the entire spill. So, what I think has to happen here, and I think there's a growing consensus across the political spectrum, is the president has got to stop saying the buck stops at BP. He's got to go back to Harry Truman's adage and say the buck stops here. As he goes down there tomorrow, obviously there will be media open moments. I hope he gets people in a room, sits people down, asks some really hard questions of public officials and BP officials and say folks, what are we doing to work the problem to protect the ecology, the coastline down here, to protect the families and the businesses? Because, again, under federal law, the president shall ensure effective and immediate removal of the discharge.

Joe Scarborough: All right. Congressman Mike Pence, we thank you for being with us.